

SCHOOL DISTRICT  
#83 SCHOOLS  
EARLY  
LITERACY



Career  
Education

Numeracy  
(Math Games)



Pirate  
loppet

Me to  
We  
(Social  
Responsibility)



Feb. 06, 2017  
**STAYING  
CONNECTED**  
~ A message from Official Trustee Mike McKay ~

**To North Okanagan-Shuswap School District  
Community Members:**

*As we move past the half-way point of the 2016/17 school year, I am pleased to share with you that we continue to make progress on a number of fronts.*

*The recommendations from the Special Advisor Report continue to receive attention from the district's leadership team and from me. I regularly provide updates on that work at each public board meeting as well as at the Partner Group Table and am pleased that we are making progress in addressing the matters that were raised in the report.*

*January and February are crucial times for the first stages of budget development. We are reviewing current areas of expenditure to ensure that the district's resources (current and anticipated) are focused on addressing our highest priority needs to support student success. To do that requires examining achievement data/evidence and I have appreciated presentations at recent public board meetings that highlight how are students are doing – both the successes and the areas of concern. We are committed to ensuring that the budget for 2017-18 will allocate funds where they are needed most.*

*Decisions have been made related to previous motions regarding school consolidations and organization*

*In December, 2016, I considered a number of motions that had been contemplated by the previous board. The outcomes are outlined below.*

**Armstrong Area**

- end the school closure consultation period for Armstrong Elementary, with no recommendation to close a school in Armstrong at this time.*
- commit to a full district review to be completed by December 2017 that will address demographics, school configurations and catchment areas, etc.*

**Salmon Arm Area**

- end the school closure consultation period for Silver Creek Elementary, with no recommendation to close the school at this time.*

## CODING IN THE CLASSROOM



- commit to a full district review to be completed by December 2017 that will address demographics, school configurations and catchment areas, etc.

- consider the educational impact on students who are in three and four grade splits, with the results to be provided at the February public board meeting.

- establish a Task Force to identify options to reduce the number of student transitions in the Salmon Arm area and develop a process to determine the feasibility of the options identified.

### Sicamous Area

- bring recommendations to the February 14 public board meeting in response to the Sicamous K-12 Task Force report on the issue of sustaining viable educational programs from Kindergarten through Graduation.

### Update on Sicamous K-12

In June 2016, I reviewed the Task Force report that had been finalized in the Spring and followed up by meeting with the Task Force in person and via technology. Their passion for the community and for educational options for local children is commendable and their efforts are appreciated. As a result of our meetings and in response to changing circumstances and options available to the school district, I shared the following context with the Task Force members and with members of the school district's senior leadership team:

- The K-12 Task Force was commissioned at a time when school closures were a real possibility and the district's resources could not sustain the programs, services and facilities that were in place. The Task Force recommendation to consolidate into a single K-12 school in Sicamous was a viable response to the circumstances of the day. It was a solution that would ensure a continuity of education from K-12 in the community;
- The K-12 proposal would require a school closure process for Parkview Elementary, and would likely subsequently result in disposing of the land and building to generate funds to support a renovation of Eagle River Secondary to accommodate the full range of students, particularly the primary-age students. At the time of the Task Force Report it was anticipated that, in future years, there would be some ongoing operating savings from the closure of Parkview;
- There were ongoing concerns - even with the K-12 concept - about long-term viability of the secondary school program for students Grades 8-12. Small schools struggle to offer a full suite of program options and there are many secondary-age students in Sicamous who travel to other schools in the district in order to access course options. A dwindling Gr. 8-12 population would put the future of the secondary school at risk;
- Many people supported the K-12 concept as it was seen as the only way to sustain a full education program within the community;

## Cardboard boat design and races!



## Ice Fishing (Unplug & Play)



## Trading Up (Exploring the Trades)



## Chinese New Year



- *Several community members were opposed to the K-12 plan for a number of reasons; however, many initial challenges were successfully addressed by the Task Force through its thorough research and in its report. Other matters - like the closer proximity of Parkview to the major residential area and worries about young children needing to cross the round about - continued to be of concern; and,*
- *There were some suggestions that a preferable K-12 single school location would be on the Parkview Elementary School site. The district has identified several challenges to that option including the size of the property and the substantial cost of renovating the school to add lab spaces for science, technology education, home economics and other secondary school course offerings.*

***Since the K-12 Task Force report was completed, a number of important variables have changed:***

- *Rural Education Enhancement Fund (REEF) was introduced, providing districts with an opportunity to receive grants to keep small/rural schools open;*
- *It has been confirmed that if K-12 at the Eagle River Secondary School site were to proceed, the district would be required to engage in formal school closure consultations for Parkview Elementary. Given the REEF grant, it would no longer be accurate to list financial pressures as a reason to close Parkview. Nor could school closure be recommended because of insufficient population at Parkview;*
- *Other sources of Ministry of Education funding have been accessed by the district since last spring and enrolment has increased this Fall, meaning that the level of financial concern in the district has been mitigated; and,*
- *Discussions with the municipality have identified a number of potential benefits of retaining a two-school model, including introducing more early childhood options and space at Parkview Elementary and implementing a specialized secondary school program that would attract and retain students and would align with the overall community development plan including new business initiatives.*

***As a result of the many developments since last spring, I have asked the Task Force and the senior leadership team to provide their thoughts on an alternative option:***

- *To configure Parkview Elementary as a K-5 elementary school and include early childhood services in the school building;*
- *To configure Eagle River as a Grade 6-12 school and ensure there is a strong “middle years” focus and programming for students Grades 6-8 and a specific secondary program focus that will help to increase the viability of the secondary program for local students; and,*
- *To allocate capital funds (local and through Ministry grant processes) to update Eagle River Secondary and to ensure that early childhood spaces are appropriate at Parkview Elementary.*

***Next Steps:***

*I recognize that there will be significant disappointment felt by those who saw the Task Force report recommendation as the only viable option to maintain full educational services in Sicamous. In sharing the alternative (K-5/6-12) proposal as an alternative, I hope we can generate dialogue with the community so that the decisions made this spring will serve Sicamous – the community and the learners – for many, many years to come.*

*Please note that the February 14 public board meeting will be held in Sicamous (see upcoming Board Meeting dates on following page) and there will be an additional opportunity for public input at a meeting that will begin immediately after the conclusion of the public board meeting on Feb. 14*

*Additionally, school PACs may wish to include this topic on their upcoming agendas.*

*Task Force members have shared with me the importance of reaching a conclusion in response to the K-12 Task Force recommendation as soon as is practical. I hope that we are able to do that at the March public board meeting.*

## ***Upcoming School District Meetings:***

***Tuesday, Feb. 14*** – Public Board Meeting At 6 p.m. at Eagle River Secondary.

***Tuesday, Feb. 14*** – K-12 Future of Sicamous Schools and Programs public forum. This meeting will commence immediately after the Public Board meeting, slated for 6 p.m. at Eagle River Secondary.

***Tuesday, March 14*** – Public Board Meeting at 6 p.m. at Pleasant Valley Secondary School

***Tuesday, April 4*** - Please note this change of date for the April meeting. It will now be held on April 4 at A.L. Fortune Secondary at 6 p.m.

***Monday, April 10*** – Public Budget Consultation Meeting at 6 p.m. at the District Education Support Centre

***Monday, May 15*** - Public Board Meeting at 6 p.m. at the District Education Support Centre. Please note this is a Monday, not a Tuesday.

***Tuesday, June 13*** - Public Board Meeting at 6 p.m. at the District Education Support Centre.

*In every community, the perspectives of parents and other community members are an essential part of the education journey. I appreciate your willingness to participate and to engage as we continue to work through several processes to make sure we are providing the best possible learning environments for our children.*

*Respectfully,*

***Mike McKay***

*Mike McKay, Official Trustee*